



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

personality of the pious mystic, whom his adorers revere as a seer and miracle-worker, foreseen by prophets and encircled by a nimbus of fire.

An interesting chapter is given to the folk-song. Polish Jews are essentially an urban population; their songs have little to do with nature, and, from the position of the Jew in his adopted country, possess no patriotic tinge. The oppression and gloom of the intellectual atmosphere gives to song a pessimistic character; the passion of love has been so completely suppressed by the preference for didactic composition, and the custom of youthful marriages, that the word does not exist in the Yiddish vocabulary, and was borrowed from the German only about the middle of the century. The tribulations of the orphan and the widow, the terror of enforced military service, satire of the fanatical Khassidim, form common themes of the folk-song. In the case of Morris Rosenfeld, a poet of the first capacity has been wearing out his life in the sweat-shops of New York, of whose horrors he has furnished dreadful pictures.

The rapidity of development of this short-lived literature is illustrated by the history of the wedding jester or *badchen*. In mediæval time the function of this personage was to amuse the guests at the wedding, while the serious discourses were delivered by the rabbi and the bridegroom. In Russia he had come to usurp these functions; but in the fifties it occurred to Zunser, then only in his teens, to make the *badchen* a singer of songs. Zunser had talent as a composer, and his words and tunes immediately became popular in Russia, Galicia, and Roumania; in a short time the former jester became a minstrel, who, if he could, produced original compositions of his own. The song-writer who had such an effect on the customs of his people now is a printer in New York.

It is impossible here to follow Professor Wiener through his sketch of the rapid evolution of Yiddish literature in its swiftly changing periods. A complete bibliography would be enormous, the authors of the present century numbering at least four or five thousand; but as the works have been thrown out with no care for preservation, and disappear with wonderful rapidity, completeness in this task is impossible, nor would the undertaking have interest except for its scientific side. In America, this literature is in rapid decay, the solvent of American institutions speedily absorbing independent Jewish folk-life, and the theatre, especially, having sunk to the lowest level. The patience and learning of Professor Wiener has furnished, in the form of notes, an abundance of references for the use of any one who may desire to make a study of the subject.

The latter part of the book is devoted to a chrestomathy, from which the reader may form some idea of the speech and the compositions for which it has furnished a medium.

W. W. Newell.

PEASANT LORE FROM GAELIC IRELAND. Collected by DANIEL DEENEY.
London: D. Nutt. 1900. Pp. vii, 80.

This little book contains a curious gathering of Irish superstitions, and, like every gleaning from that inexhaustible source, serves to cast new light

on certain points of primitive belief, common in a measure to ancient Europe, but which have survived more completely in an isolated country. Gaelic peasants, as the collector observes in his preface, are surrounded by a region of mystery, peopled with beings divided into good and bad, there being no intermediate class. These spiritual personages are continually passing and repassing, especially at night; some of them are evil-disposed, and will work harm unless their influence is guarded against by certain rules or rites. Some individuals on this earth are supposed to be in communication with the "bad class" of the mystic world, and in this connection red-haired people are especially suspected. In the dark it is necessary to accompany a friend who may be leaving the house as far as a running stream, which acts as a barrier to everything bad. A sick cow is supposed to have been "shot," and is treated by making the sign of the cross on her sides and nostrils, and by measuring with arm from elbow to finger-point, proceeding from tail to horns. If the cure is to succeed, the third measurement will be the shortest. If the remedy fails, it is necessary to give the animal to St. Martin; such a cow so given is consecrated by a nick in the ear, and should be killed and eaten at a feast on the eve of the saint, it may be years afterwards. In the north of Ireland the usage is not so strict, and cows may be seen at fairs whose ears have repeatedly been incised and whose value is thereby lowered. Dead relatives are believed to spend their nights in their old home, and, since the presence of mortals would exclude the ghosts, for this purpose it is usual to retire before twelve, to tidy the hearth, and to arrange the stools in a semicircle for the guests. After midnight a traveller is in danger of being carried off by the "wee folk," among whom are taken to be the souls of the departed, and who at this hour may be encountered marching in procession with music. On St. Bridget's Eve it is customary to bring in St. Bridget's mantle, which is a rag previously placed in a bush outside the house. The formula is: "Go ye on your knees, and close ye your eyes, and let Blessed Bridget in." Those within comply with the request, and on the third repetition cry out simultaneously, "Come in, come in, and welcome." A piece of the "mantle" is then bestowed on every one of the family, and must be kept twelve months for luck. The mashed potatoes, in which a hole has been made for the melted butter, are then eaten. The bush in this case may be presumed to be holy, seeing that tree worship survives in the honor paid to particular bushes looked on as sacred to *sheeogs* or fairies, and which no Irish peasant would destroy or injure. In one case such a "fairy bush" grew in the way of a wall to be built along the shore road in Spiddal, county Galway; no inducements would move the workmen to remove the bush, and it was finally left undisturbed, in a niche made for the purpose. The stones of certain cairns are also sacred to the "wee folk," as the fairies are called. The practice of sacrifice to fairies continues in force. The first drops of a cow's milk must be dropped on the ground; the smuggler gives the fairies the first and best part of his liquor, and failure in such present is sure to be followed by disaster, while in case of a proper offering he will be warned against the approach of the revenue officers.

The cake must be nipped before stowing away in the cupboard, a usage kept up with no comprehension of its origin. On St. Martin's Eve the blood of three cocks must be drawn, an act performed in every Gaelic household. This is sprinkled about the house, and a little daubed on the forehead of every member of the family. Salt is regarded as prophylactic against evil, and is eaten before going to a funeral, whither a little salt should be taken in the pocket. If milk is to be given away, salt must be put in it. Belief in the evil eye is in full vigor. When a ploughman reaches the end of a field, if he observes any person to whom he desires to speak, he must not allow the horses to stand until he has turned their faces toward the other end, so that the tails are presented to the person; in this position they will be safe. If in driving any animal to market, a person is encountered, who does not "bless" them, it is necessary to say, before the person passes on, "God bless your heart, your eye, and my share;" the evil eye cannot then "blink" the animals. If the blinker has looked on the beast, the latter must be struck three times with "the tail of your coat," next the ground. In travelling at night, it is wise to tread in the tracks of horses, for the path is secure from harm. If milk is given from the dairy, the receiver must bless the milk and the cow. Manure must not be removed after sunset, nor ashes put out on New Year's Day. On New Year's Eve, water for domestic use must be made ready before dark. Injury from a spirit may be received in the form of a blow from an invisible hand.

In presenting these extracts from a brief but amazing picture of Irish peasant life, it may be asked what comments would be made if such wild and ancient superstitions had been obtained from negroes in the Southern States of the Union? Yet at no remote day the rural life of England would have presented beliefs as strange.

POPULAR STUDIES IN MYTHOLOGY, ROMANCE, AND FOLK-LORE. London: D. Nutt. 1899-1900. Nos. 1-6.

Under this head the firm of David Nutt is publishing a series of little pamphlets, issued at the price of sixpence each, intended to furnish readers with sketches of the subjects to which they relate, and provided with suitable bibliographic information.

No. 1 offers an account of "The Influence of Celtic upon Mediæval Romance," by Alfred Nutt. The writer considers that the "matter of Britain," including especially Arthurian story, derives its "circumstance, form, and animating spirit" from the older Celtic traditions, which are best represented by the extant remains of Irish legend. His view is that the romantic spirit, as we now understand the term, is especially of Celtic origin. As to the disputed point of Welsh or Breton sources for French romances, he considers that the evidence furnished by proper names favors derivation from both sources, orally through Bretons, and in a written form from Welshmen.

No. 2, called "Folk-lore: what is it? and what is the good of it?" is an admirable paper, in the form of an address by Mr. E. Sidney Hartland,